

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2063

Introduced by Assembly Member Huffman
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Chesbro and Evans)
(Coauthors: Senators Leno and Wiggins)

February 18, 2010

An act to add Section 6902.5 to the Fish and Game Code, and to add Section 425.11 to the Government Code, relating to fish.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2063, as introduced, Huffman. Fish: Chinook salmon.

Existing law establishes the Salmon, Steelhead Trout, and Anadromous Fisheries Protection Act to protect and increase the naturally spawning salmon, steelhead trout, and anadromous fishery resources of the state. Existing law defines anadromous fish as fish that spawn in fresh water and spend a portion of their lives in the ocean.

This bill would add specified legislative findings and declarations to the act and would state the intent of the Legislature that the department utilize best available science and a life cycle analysis in determining where to focus and prioritize conservation planning efforts for recovery of Chinook and other salmonid species. This bill would also designate the Chinook salmon as the official state anadromous fish.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 6902.5 is added to the Fish and Game
- 2 Code, to read:

1 6902.5. (a) The Legislature finds and declares all of the
2 following:

3 (1) The Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), a fish
4 native to many California streams for thousands of years, is an
5 extremely important ecological, economic, and cultural resource
6 to all the people of California.

7 (2) Chinook salmon are anadromous fish that are born in fresh
8 cold water streams, migrate hundreds of miles to the ocean where
9 they spend most of their adult life, and then return to spawn and
10 lay their eggs in the stream of their birth.

11 (3) Salmonids have a long history of interactions with humans,
12 appearing as images in Cro-Magnon cave art of 10,000 or more
13 years ago, and have been an important food source for indigenous
14 peoples throughout the salmonids' geographic range, including
15 Native American tribes in California. The first commercial harvest
16 of Chinook salmon began in the Sacramento River in the 1850s
17 when it provided food for the gold rush.

18 (4) Chinook salmon have managed to survive and evolve over
19 hundreds of years in California, showing extraordinary resilience
20 in the face of tremendous change, including, but not limited to,
21 the damming and diversion of most major California rivers,
22 hydraulic mining during the gold rush, past timber harvesting and
23 over-fishing practices, loss of cold water and riparian habitat,
24 competing demands for water, and changing ocean conditions.

25 (5) Despite their resilience and cultural, historical, aesthetic,
26 and economic importance, salmonid fishes, including Chinook
27 salmon, are in severe decline in most of their native habitats and
28 many populations have been extirpated.

29 (6) All Chinook salmon runs in California have declined
30 dramatically. Of the four separate Central Valley Chinook salmon
31 runs, two are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act of
32 1973 and the California Endangered Species Act and are currently
33 threatened with extinction.

34 (7) The Central Valley fall run, the strongest of the four Central
35 Valley Chinook salmon runs, has been the backbone of the
36 recreational and commercial salmon fishing industry in California.
37 However, the salmon fishing season has been closed the last two
38 years due to a dramatic drop in the number of returning fish, which
39 dropped 90 percent from 738,000 in 2002, to 66,000 in 2008, an
40 all time low. Fishery scientists anticipate 2010 will be the third

1 year in a row where the number of returning fish drop below
2 122,000, the minimum escapement necessary for long-term survival
3 of the species. In 2007, the National Marine Fisheries Service
4 placed the Chinook salmon from the Central Valley fall run on
5 their “Species of Special Concern” list.

6 (8) The economic impact of the closure of the Central Valley
7 fall run is estimated at over \$2 billion, with as many as 23,000
8 jobs lost. The California salmon industry supports thousands of
9 recreational fishers, over 1,000 licensed commercial boats (down
10 from a high of over 8,000 boats in the 1970s), and hundreds of
11 related businesses. Many of these businesses were forced to shut
12 down in 2008 and 2009, while others managed to stay open through
13 receiving federal disaster assistance. It is anticipated that if the
14 salmon season is closed again in 2010 as many as 30 percent of
15 the remaining businesses will fail.

16 (9) It is estimated that recovery of the Central Valley fall run
17 could produce over \$5 billion in economic revenues and as many
18 as 94,000 jobs.

19 (10) Chinook salmon need freshwater habitat that includes cold,
20 clean water; appropriate water depth, quantity, and flow velocities;
21 upland and riparian vegetation to stabilize soil and provide shade;
22 clean gravel for spawning and egg-rearing; large woody debris to
23 provide resting and hiding places; adequate food; and varied
24 channel forms.

25 (11) Bringing Chinook salmon back from the brink of extinction
26 will not be easy, but it is possible, thanks to the inherent
27 adaptability of California’s salmonids to changing conditions.
28 However, accomplishing this task will require renewed
29 commitment and coordination on the part of the Legislature, state
30 and federal fishery agencies, the fishing community, and other
31 interested parties.

32 (b) The Legislature proclaims the goal of restoring Chinook
33 salmon populations to sustainable levels, sufficient to support
34 viable recreational, commercial, and tribal fisheries, within a
35 decade. To accomplish this goal, it is the intent of the Legislature
36 that the Department of Fish and Game and the Fish and Game
37 Commission work together collaboratively with other public and
38 private partners, including, but not limited to, the Ocean Protection
39 Council, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries),
40 the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pacific Fisheries

1 Management Council, fishing men and women, fishing businesses,
2 local fishing communities, and other interested parties to restore
3 thriving and sustainable populations of Chinook salmon in
4 California. In implementing this goal, it is the intent of the
5 Legislature that the department utilize best available science and
6 a life cycle analysis in determining where to focus and prioritize
7 conservation planning efforts for recovery of Chinook and other
8 salmonid species.

9 SEC. 2. Section 425.11 is added to the Government Code, to
10 read:

11 425.11. The Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) is
12 the official state anadromous fish.